THIS IS A FIRST DRAFT OF MY NEW BOOKLET. COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS WELCOME

A Few Things You May Not Know About God

God is much easier to understand than you might think

John O'Regan

A Few Things You May Not Know About God

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PREFACE

I've known God since I was a baby in nappies and apart from the few years I served Satan, It's been a presence in my life for most of my 62 years. Obviously the very first time I became ware of It, I had no idea what It was. I was less than a year old so to me It was just something that was around; my parents were around, so were their friends and this other thing, whatever It was.

Some time after experiencing God I was at mass looking at all the legs around me and felt so little joy in all the mumbling people were doing. So I looked up to the beautiful stain glass windows and realised that this thing I called It, was really God!

Some time after that I tried telling people about God and you can imagine how that went in 1960s Ireland. So I never said anything about God to anybody after that, as I had no proof of any kind that I was telling the truth.

That is until August 7th 2002 when I got all the proof I'd ever need. Unfortunately for you, dear reader, I only got proof for myself! So while I may know that God is real, I can't offer you any concrete proof whatsoever. All I can do is pass on what I've learned and leave it up to yourself to decide where the truth lies.

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CHAPTER 1

GOD IS REAL

Sortof, kindof, yino, emm, ahm, and um are all words that don't really mean anything. They're used mainly in conversation and are described as filler words or nonsense words, depending on which expert you talk to.

Most words though do have meaning. And while everybody knows that the word god has meaning, what does the word actually mean? I took a look at Webster's definition and while it's accurate in some respects, it makes the same mistakes everybody else does.

So if you can't trust a dictionary then all we're left with are more primitive means of finding a definition.....ask somebody!

If you were to ask a Christian they'd probably tell you about about Jesus or talk about a being of infinite love. Muslims and Jews would likely describe a being that created the universe and also loves all of us who live here. And atheists, while of course denying the existence of God, would generally speaking be aware that the word has meaning.

Is there anything that all these people of different creeds could agree on?

Is there any accepted definition on which we can all agree?

We all used to believe that God created the Heavens and the Earth as described in Genesis but that's been roundly debunked by science. And at some future date human beings will understand how the universe came into being. Probably through a natural phenomenon that obeys the laws of science and mathematics. So there's no way we all agree that the word god refers to a creator being. Similarly, a lot of people would have a hard time reconciling a being of infinite love destroying all life in a worldwide flood!

If you go through each and all of the supposed traits of God there is only one point of agreement across all cultures and faiths (including none) and it is this. In some

unspecified way, the word “god” refers to something very good, something exceptionally good, something transcendentally good.
But, you might ask (and here’s the real kicker) couldn’t the word god just be a made up-word for something that’s not real. A word that’s clearly filled with meaning, but does it describe something real, something that in fact exists?

Is Bhutan real and how do you know? You can look it up in an atlas, you can search for it online, you can speak to someone who’s been there, and you could even go there yourself. Obviously you can be pretty sure that every country in the UN actually exists. After all, somebody who knows what they’re doing probably made sure that all the countries admitted to the UN really existed. And if it’s in an atlas, well same story there.
But what if you’re one of those die hard extremists who refuses to believe anything you haven’t seen with your own eyes. You simply refuse to believe anything or anyone unless you can independently verify it yourself. It’s a very extreme position to take but then, when it comes to proof that God exists, you’d feel very justified in doing so.

There is a way you can use to meet God and it’s a way that’s probably existed for millennia, if not a lot longer! If you’ve already tried a lot of recreational drugs then you’re most of the way there. But if you haven’t, then alcohol, cannabis, speed, E, acid, shrooms, and anything else you can get your hands on, give them all a go. Figure out for yourself what suits you and what doesn’t. In other words, educate yourself into the marvellous world of drug culture.
Please bear in mind that drugs are nowhere near as dangerous as the governments of the world have led us to believe. In fact, if you can handle a drink and don’t fall over spluttering from a fag, then you’re very likely well able for any of the illegal drugs. And if you don’t believe me then check out David Nutt’s article in The Lancet from November 2010.

Then, when you're ready, do 3 mega trips over 3 weekends in a row. I've never read anything by Terence McKenna but I've read about his description of what he called a "Heroic Dose". He said 5g of dried US mushrooms did the trick. My advice would be to try **at least** 400 Irish shrooms for the first and third trips. You could do less (or more) for the second trip but just make sure you take as many as you can for the first and last trip.

I also recommend doing these trips alone. You'll get more weird than you've ever been in your entire life so you'd probably freak out anybody close by. And their mood would impact on your trip.

Secondly, remember Timothy Leary's advice on set and setting. You'll need to have the right environment (setting) so make sure you'll be uninterrupted and won't bother anybody else. And of course there's the mindset. Only do this if you're life is fairly stable, i.e. not if you're going through a divorce, family bereavement or the like.

During the third trip something will happen. I can't say what will happen for you, nobody can. But you'll be given the opportunity to be with God. It might last a few minutes or a lot longer, that all depends on what's going on in your life.

Obviously this will only work for people who are interested in spirituality. A painter, writer or musician might feel more drawn to an experience that would inform their own artistic proclivities. Even scientists have been inspired by their experiences with psychedelics. But those people who feel they're on a spiritual journey will experience something quite different.

You can also experience what it's like to be close to God by meditation and smoking cannabis regularly. Regular smokers rarely experience the happy/hippy high that occasional tokers know so well. Instead they tend to find themselves in a very tranquil, peaceful place that's very similar to (if not exactly the same as) meditation. This is in all likelihood the origin of the lazy stoner myth. Would you call Buddhist monks lazy meditators! Would you decry all the hours they spend every day doing absolutely nothing.

Everybody is different but generally speaking asking somebody who's stoned to engage in strenuous physical activity or inherently boring tasks is unlikely to be productive. It's like asking someone who's in the middle of the rosary to do the dishes! The two are wildly incompatible.

CHAPTER 2

GOD IS OMNISCIENT

I was walking down the main street one day and passed by a shop where a guy I knew had died. There was a display stand outside the shop for all the different lottery tickets and suddenly the numbers 4, 5, 6 popped into my head. No idea where the numbers came from but later that night those same numbers came up in the lotto draw. Fast forward a year and a half and the same thing happened, this time with the numbers 1, 10 and 11.

A few years after that (Monday August 5th 2002) I was sitting in my armchair, in front of an empty fireplace and a switched off TV when I noticed the time on my old VCR (remember those). It was 20:02.

It was two minutes past eight on a Monday night, exactly 48 hours before the next lottery draw. Next thing I knew, it was still 20:02 on the VCR but something had happened. I sat there for a minute before another strange sounding thought came through, “double the numbers”. Again, I sat there waiting, for what I didn’t know, until a thought of my own said “what about 3”.

When I say “thought of my own” I should briefly describe what I mean. I know my own thoughts, I know the quality of those thoughts, I know how they feel. So when a “thought” occurs that seems to come from somewhere other than myself, |I’m aware of it. That being said, when the “what about 3” happened, I knew I was supposed to think that it was me coming up with the final piece of the puzzle, when in fact it came from somewhere else.

I now had 7 numbers and didn’t know what to do. If I had replaced the 10 with 3 and doubled those 6 numbers I’d have won the lotto on August 7th 2002. €1.825 million was the jackpot that night and I could’ve won.

Roughly 6 or 7 months later my attention was again drawn to the time the VCR was displaying, 09:17. And I knew that was significant. I didn’t know why it mattered, I

just knew it was important. Well 9 and 17 is 26, I thought to myself, I wonder if that's the clue. Around a week later I was watching the lottery draw, looking for a clue (and €1,825,000) when I knew this was it! What did 26 have to do with this draw, I had no clue until the results were displayed on Teletext. 26 people matched 5 or better on that night.

I don't know if this matters or not but there were close to a thousand people who matched 5 on August^{7th} 2002 and normally that cohort of people would have been well less than 100. This is easily explained by the fact that all 6 numbers that came up were less than 30 and lots of people play all birthday numbers. I'd have been one of the "matched 5" as well if I'd played the 6 numbers I'd picked up over the years. But instead, purely by being myself, and doing exactly what I thought was right, I got the final number needed to win the jackpot.

So why didn't I play the Lotto, even a match 5 would have been a few euros! I thought it was significant that despite all my knowledge I didn't know what to do with 7 numbers. Which one would I leave out. I tried and I tried but I just couldn't figure it out. So I went to a place that's supposed to be a Blues legend, the Crossroads.

As it turns out, the Crossroads isn't a specific place like in the 1986 film Crossroads with Ralph Macchio. It can be any crossroads and in my case it was Punches Cross in Limerick. I walked to Punches Cross, not because I had any notion in my head that there was something called The Crossroads that I needed to get to. No, it was because I'd have to cross the road there to get to the nearest Lotto vendor.

I got to the cross and stood looking diagonally across at the old petrol station, directly opposite Punches Pub, and I simply couldn't cross the road. Not because of the traffic or anything, I just couldn't walk across the road to the shop. I looked over my shoulder to see what was holding me back (I wasn't being physically restrained) and "saw" my father above the wall. He was in his usual great form and was leaning forward towards me. He was leaning over a black dog and I had no clue what was going on, so I gave up and went home.

CHAPTER 3

GOD IS NOT OMNIPOTENT

This one is so easy I'm amazed nobody else seems to understand it.
For anybody or anything to be omnipotent, that means they can literally do anything. They can do anything good that can be thought of and of course, to be fully omnipotent, they're able to do anything bad/evil as well. Arguing that God is omnipotent is arguing that God can do wrong and **GOD CAN NOT DO WRONG**. God never unleashed a flood, or destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, or killed the first born in Egypt. God never killed or even hurt anybody, anywhere, ever.
Arguing that God can do wrong is equivalent to arguing that "Evil is Good". That without evil good can't exist. One of Eddie Murphy's characters in *Vampire in Brooklyn* gave a good take on the issue and it's the same trap that intellectuals fall into when arguing that in a dualistic universe, good can't exist without bad. If there was no bad, it's claimed, then good wouldn't exist either. I hope this little story clears up any confusion.
There was a great bus driver that used to serve my town and while he was always very friendly and helpful, I totally took it for granted that this was just normal behaviour from any driver employed by the company. Then one day a new driver showed up who had no problem telling customers to fuck off if he felt like it. He was an asshole but without him I'd never have appreciated how good the original guy was. I wouldn't have known what being a good bus driver meant without the both of them. So, while it's true to say that we appreciate good more when we've had experience of bad, good is what civilised people call normal. Good and bad certainly can co-exist, but good is just normal life in peaceful, democratic societies. We have no problem living our lives normally, i.e. without the bad.

CHAPTER 4

GOD IS NOT LOVE

Love is a human emotion most commonly felt between friends, family and of course, lovers. It's something we feel, something that connects us very deeply. Indeed, it's probably the closest connection that it's possible for human beings to have.

When you're very close to God you'll experience a very powerful sensation and the word that best describes this sensation is love. This love you feel comes from you. It's a human reaction to being in the divine presence. It's your reaction to God.

God itself, while admittedly a very benevolent entity, doesn't really do anything. It just exists. So while God is a very positive presence in your life, that doesn't mean it loves you.

Besides, if God was love then try explaining to a 3 year old that their father doesn't God their mother. God is simply good. You don't have to be a grown up to understand that.

CHAPTER 5

GOD IS HOLY

I've written that God is good. Well, you may say..... so is a turkey sandwich. But wait a minute (I say), there are different degrees of goodness. Sure, a sandwich is a good thing, especially if you're very hungry. But what about a million euros? Well that's a lot more good than a sandwich. How about a career, your own family, the cure for cancer... now we're getting somewhere.

What is so good that it's almost sacred. So good that hurting it is treated as one of the worst crimes that exist. Childhood! The way children are in the world is precious. Their friendships are so important. Even the sound of children playing is beautiful. To intentionally hurt a child is so heinous we call it abuse, but even children aren't holy. They may be pretty close but not even they are so good that they're holy.

God is so good, even more so than children or your family, that the only way we can treat it is to regard it as holy.

I once ate a dozen mangos and stopped, not because I wasn't hungry any more or ran out of mangos but because they were the most delicious fruit I'd ever tasted. I later heard from the owner of the orchard, that the bush they came from was the best he owned (his sister used to call fruit from that tree "lumps of sugar", which probably sounds a lot better in Egyptian Arabic). So I simply couldn't make a pig of myself and scoff the lot. I treated them as something special, something unique, something I'd probably never have the chance to try again. God is like that. It's so precious, so incredible that we need to treat it with the utmost respect and kindness. Even love!

CHAPTER 6

ONLY GOOD COMES FROM GOD

Have you ever had an idea that was simply perfect. You were probably quite proud of yourself for a while until you figured out that, well..... it might not be such a great idea after all. Sure a lot of people might benefit but there'd be a minority who'd suffer. So much for your great idea!

However, very occasionally you might have an idea that not only benefits your intended audience but when you think about it, benefits a whole lot more people you hadn't considered. And further investigation shows that benefitting all those people does a whole pile of good that you hadn't thought about either. And as time goes on that initial idea/instinct/suggestion keeps mutating into areas of study/work/life that you couldn't possibly have dreamed up yourself. The only further point I must make is that no harm whatsoever accrued from that idea.

God's effect on the world is like that. If God touches your life it would probably start off just benefitting yourself, then as time goes by it will do good in other people's lives, which causes more good to happen and so on.

A lot of people think God created the universe. But if that's true then God knowingly created death, pain, suffering and even child abuse. There's simply no way that God would/could create so much misery. As amazing a place as the Universe is to live in, I think if God had ever created a universe, It probably would have done a better job.

CHAPTER 7

GOD DOESN'T JUDGE PEOPLE

When your time comes to enter the great hereafter, you'll find yourself some place where a lot of things happen. We've all heard the stories from people who've had a near-death-experience, how they were reunited with old friends and of course family members who've died. I didn't see anything that's been described in NDEs so I can't confirm/deny any of the stories you may have heard.

What I can say is that if you've done wrong during your life, then at some stage you'll find yourself standing before God. You'll be as close to God as you can be. You'll see a place prepared for you and your dreams, that's inside God. And if, like me, you've done terrible wrong in your life then you'll decide that you don't deserve to be around God. God is so perfect that you yourself will voluntarily accept the consequences of not being close to God.

God won't judge or punish you for doing wrong. You will.

CHAPTER 8

PEOPLE SAY GOD IS EVERYWHERE BECAUSE THERE IS GOOD EVERYWHERE

We all know that there's an enormous amount of harm in the world, even from nature itself. All you need do is turn on the evening news and you'll find plenty of evidence for how horrible the world is.

And we all know the exact opposite is also true. That there's good everywhere. It doesn't take a genius to figure out that if journalists were only allowed to write good news stories they'd still have plenty of news to report!

So what's the connection between the good we see in the world and God. Just because God is good, how is that related to the good we see around us?

Good is so fundamental to our humanity that it's in everything we do. We solve an equation, good. We fix a bicycle, good. Anything we learn, we learn through our instinct for good. We buy a coffee on the way to work. Do we stop and ask are we doing something good. Most people wouldn't, they'd just accept it as a good thing. And if they decided against, it would definitely be for a good reason. Our friends, good. Just about everything in our lives is used to do something good. And love, something we value so much we spend our lives looking for it, is really good. Goodness motivates and drives everything we do. So much so that without it we can become mentally ill. If you did something really good and were punished for it then at the very least you'd be very confused.

Ask yourself, am I purely and simply a biological machine that uses software in my brain to navigate my way through life on planet Earth? Or am I a good-seeking primate that has nothing but sex and bananas on my mind.

The answer is probably a combination of both although neither can explain humankind's obsession with spirituality. And it's the association between goodness and spirituality that causes us to experience God in our daily lives.

CHAPTER 9

PEOPLE SAY GOD IS IN EVERYTHING BECAUSE THERE IS GOOD IN EVERYTHING

This one is so simple I probably shouldn't include it but here goes.
Everything in the universe is both good and bad at the same time. No matter what it is, it can be used for good or ill. Even ice cream! And most of us have learned through bitter experience, that if you're suspicious of somebody then it's only a matter of time before your suspicions are confirmed. If you look for the bad in someone, you'll find bad. And vice versa.
So, if you want to lead a peaceful, civilised life, then it's best to look for the good in both the people and things around you. Of course people will let you down and remind you that we're not as civil or civilised as we need to be, but they can also be a blessing. No matter how bad they can be, we need other people.

CHAPTER 10

FROM A DISTANCE
GOD LOOKS JUST LIKE A FOG BANK

Figure 1:From a long ways off, God looks like a fog bank that seems to go on forever

This one may be a lot more difficult to understand as I'm no artist and am trying to paint a picture using words. The photo isn't bad though. If you disregard the sea in the picture and imagine it being replaced by heaven, then you've got it. Heaven is beneath God.

After I entered the spirit world, God brought me from my starting point, through the darkness, into it's presence. But just as I was about to enter God's presence I heard this incredible sound. I've looked online for a description of the sound and the closest I can figure is the Om sound described in Hinduism and Buddhism. The sound was very powerful, almost violent: amazing and frightening at the same time.

I realised that my good side was now part of God and my bad side remained outside God, in the darkness. The sound (or whatever it was) kept all the bad side of me

outside God. I tried moving backward and forward to see what would happen, i.e. would my goodness become part of the dark and would my badness move into the light. I no longer “heard” the sound but my good and bad sides stayed where they were. I could move slightly so bad+good moved slightly, but the separation remained constant.

I waited for a bit to see what else was going to happen and noticed that there was no actual separation between my good and bad sides. My good was part of God and my bad was still part of me but there was a sharp distinction between the two. It looked like a giant spike was coming up from a surface below me and went right through me, creating a separation between good and bad (or like standing in front of a fire where your front is warm and your rear is freezing). Looking further along I noticed more spike-like projections that appeared in a line and went off into the distance. Curiously and collectively they looked like a child’s drawing of a dog’s teeth (or the spikes on a crown). And then I noticed that there was a mirror image in black of the white spikes coming from the surface. I don’t know why I was always interested in Norse mythology but I reckon many years ago somebody else saw what I saw and concluded that the black spikes pointing down were Fenrir’s teeth. So the end of all existence (God creates existence) will come about when Fenrir has grown more powerful than God and devours It.

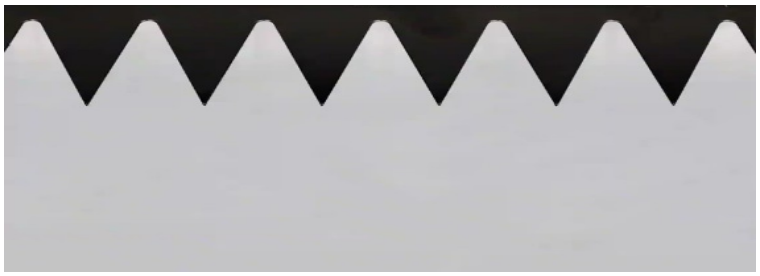

Figure 2:Fenrir's black teeth match God's white Crown

While I was above the surface I was surrounded by a fine mist, just like when your on a mountain and a cloud comes in. This mist is an aspect of God and being in It’s presence gave me a feeling of such

transcendent bliss it almost overwhelmed me. Don't ask me how I did it but I somehow managed to keep it together.

Looking down I saw a plain white surface and I asked (nobody in particular) if it was solid or was it just like the top of a cloud. As soon as I asked a black pool appeared on the surface showing me that it was solid.

I went down to check it out and noticed that the entire surface was like gently rolling hills that went off into the distance in front if me. If I'd wanted to I could have walked on into the future and to my left or right, as many people as wanted could have joined me. It reminded me of Mathew 7:13 "*Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it* ". I didn't notice any gates around but there was definitely a very broad way leading to the future. And the way was broad enough for everybody. I should mention at this point that any place in the bible that is condemnatory or judgemental is NOT relating anything to do with God's Way but some idiot human being's idea!

Then I started acting the dick! I didn't know what to do or how to act so I acted out. I acted as if the black pool was evil and what the effing f was was going on. I knew I was just acting the dick but I had to be me (I don't have lots of friends, you'll never guess why). Next thing I knew I was over the edge and facing the leading edge of the fog bank. I saw an opening appear and a space made for me. I saw something I'd seen years before in a dream so I knew there was room for me and my dreams with God.

I was about to enter when I remembered some of the crap I'd pulled when I was younger. I thought that someone like me really didn't belong with God (even though God itself hadn't done anything that could be considered judgemental) so I backed off and waited to see what would happen.

I was looking at the face of God (the leading edge of a fog bank) and noticed that God appears to go on forever to the left (the future). I couldn't see much to my right except for what looked like a giant single strand of DNA (or rosary beads) that was wrapped around God. Whatever it was that was wrapped around God was composed of individual segments. The segment nearest me had a window and a couple were

inside looking at me. They were standing so close that they could be mistaken for being a single person. I saw the end of a bed there so the message was clear, people who love one another so much that they want to love one another forever, can do so right next to heaven. Like I said elsewhere, I was unable to make out what goes on in heaven but I was able to see that there were a lot of babies there.

I don't mind telling you that I was very upset at that stage. Rejected, dejected and fucked up..... when I saw someone coming up to me from quite a ways off. He looked like he was coming up a hill, raised his right arm, walked over to me and sat down to my left.

CHAPTER 11

PEOPLE SAY JESUS IS GOD
BECAUSE JESUS IS GOOD, AS GOD IS GOOD

I was immediately consoled. All the crap I'd accumulated over 38 years (my age at the time) just vanished. I was content and at peace which is pretty extraordinary for a guy like me. A very troubled man.

So there we were, happy as Larry until something occurred to me, something I thought wasn't right. There were 3 guys there, Jesus, myself and another guy who seemed to be looking out for me. But it was all guys! Sure there was one woman in a room with the other guy but why was the experience so male. Why wasn't femininity represented. Jesus looked a bit put out by my attitude, looked down on me, slightly turned his head and touched his hair. His beard seemed to disappear and become part of his hair and no joking, he looked like a woman. Admittedly he didn't look like supermodel or anything but he looked like an attractive woman.

I should also mention that Jesus doesn't look anything like the paintings we see in church. He isn't a blond haired image of Teutonic perfection, he's fairly obese.

At that point I started being an even worse dickhead! Not out of hatred but out of a need to understand. Remember all this is happening while my physical body is sitting in a chair on planet Earth so I think I was well justified in trying to figure out exactly what was going on. I looked over to my right (the past) and someone was there who had followed me through the darkness to God. Jesus literally flew over to him and while he was distracted an enormous sound came from an enormous being way off to my right. He looked human but reminded me of the Greek Titans, big and dumb.

At that point I took one last look at God and thought that I now had my own perspective on what God was. And Jesus roared a despairing NO just as I left. The final message was clear. What I saw wasn't just for my benefit but for everyone. The Christian religions are close to Jesus's teachings but they're missing some crucial

facts that causes them to go round in circles chasing their own tail. I'll try here to clear up a few issues.

How can anyone think Jesus is God? After all Jesus is a small human being and God is a virtually infinite celestial being.

People who've spent their lives studying religious texts have found that the only place in the bible where Jesus even indirectly calls himself God, is in the Gospel of John. One of these exegetes (Bart Ehrman) has pointed out that if Jesus really was God, then it's a fairly significant point that the other three gospel authors missed.

So let's take it as read that nobody knows and nobody has ever known if Jesus is God or not. Having met the guy I can tell you this. He's made from the same stuff as God. A plain white colour that's exactly the same as God.

Anyone who believes in Jesus's divinity doesn't do so because of the way he looks. It's because of what's inside of him, his nature. Jesus is made from the same stuff as God, so people who worship Jesus are worshipping God. It explains what the gospel writers meant by saying that through Jesus you can come to know God.

CHAPTER 12

THE VERY SMALLEST PIECE OF GOD IS AN INFINITY OF GOODNESS, ALL TO ITSELF

When you're very close to God, concentrate your sight to look as closely as you can and try to focus on as small a point as possible. I know that this seems odd, as God is continuous and not made up from smaller parts, but give it a go.

As you continue to focus on a smaller and smaller part of God you'll feel better, and better, and better! Eventually you'll feel so good that the only word that can describe how you're feeling is love. You'll discover that the tiny part of God you focused on, fills you with more love than you've ever known. And the smaller the focus the more love you feel. It might not be the actual infinity we know but it's certainly as much love as human beings can feel or even imagine. So while God isn't of infinite size, it engenders infinite love.

It should be fairly obvious to you by now why Christians call Jesus God. He's made from the same stuff as God. And how did Jesus achieve this? By following God's way.

CHAPTER 13

HEAVEN AND HELL ARE BOTH REAL

Like I wrote earlier, I couldn't really see that much of Heaven. Which could mean a lot of things. First off, it might be that my knowing all about it beforehand could spoil the surprise, not just for myself but for anybody I told. Plus it might encourage living people to give up on life.

But the reason I think is most likely to be true, is that it's different for everybody. So just because I happened to be in the general vicinity of Heaven doesn't mean I know what your afterlife will be.

Hell on the other hand, well I got a real good look. Probably because if you've been in God's presence then the Devil will want to take a look at you. It's so awful not even Dante's Inferno can compare to the reality.

I may write a description of hell in a later version of this document, but it's something I'd much prefer to put off as long as possible.

CHAPTER 14

DO ANIMALS GO TO HEAVEN?

The very short and very honest answer is that I just don't know. But, one thing I do know (as do you), is that animals have feelings.

Ask any farmer, or pet owner or anyone who's around non-humans a lot (I even met a bee keeper once who described his bees as having moods). If they have moods then at the very least they're self aware. They may not be able to recognise themselves in a mirror so they haven't as keen a sense of self awareness as humans, but they certainly have a rudimentary sense of self. Sometimes they're happy, sometimes afraid; they even dream.

That's the easy part. More difficult for you to accept is that at various times in my life I've been able to communicate with animals, birds, fish and even insects. House pets are different. They think of themselves as part of a pack, your pack. So if I try communicating with them, they just think I'm being weird! Same thing with crows. They fly around doing their thing, so if some human nearby attempts to communicate with them they think "what's this crumb bum doing". I can't walk up to a non-human and have a conversation or anything like that. But on the other hand, if there's a good reason for us to communicate then it happens.

Like I've written elsewhere, I didn't get to see what goes on in heaven. Plus, at no point during my vision on August 5th 2002, did I come across anything that might have given me a clue. Sorry folks, but whether or not your beloved mutt has an afterlife, I simply don't know. But this I do know... all life is good. And if there's one spiritual maxim that applies to God then it's that anywhere there is good then there is God also. I personally believe that the good in life continues after death but in a spiritual domain. So if you were to ask my opinion then I'd give a resounding yes, your pet(s) will have an afterlife, just like you.

CHAPTER 15

ETERNITY IS A VERY LONG TIME

Most of us know and like people for years: 10 years, 20 years, even 50. It's not hard to imagine being friends with people for half a century or more. But being with the same people for thousands or millions of years! That's not something we can even imagine (our ape brains never evolved to deal with such lengthy periods of time). Couldn't it be akin to a nightmare; an eternal nightmare! Doesn't it sound like a version of hell?

That depends though.

Have you ever had a night out that you could describe the best night of your life?

Have you ever been in love?

Have you ever had an experience that felt so good you wished it could go on forever?

During any/all of these, human beings experience the passage of time differently than when we're bored. And the afterlife is very like that. If you love someone so much that you never want to be without them, then there's a place in heaven, just for the two of you. Far from becoming bored, frustrated or resentful, the two of you will be as close as two people can be, forever. The place for lovers is just outside heaven itself so while you'll have all the privacy you want, there's still plenty of people nearby.

Similarly for with people with a religious vocation or anyone who has dedicated their life to God. The feelings of peace and love engendered by being in the divine presence are so sublime, so good, so perfect, that the prospect of spending all of eternity with God isn't way too much time at all, or too little. Like Goldilocks and her porridge, it's just about the right amount of time.

Now for a short note on how time works when you're in the spirit world. Obviously, you'd think, time must fly there so that years seem like seconds. Well, not really. In fact, just the opposite. You can visit the spirit world for what seems like 20 minutes,

but no time passes in the universe at all, or virtually none. The only conclusion I can come to is that spacetime doesn't exist at all in the spirit world. So eternity has no meaning there. People exist there (I think) in a state of spiritual bliss that transcends our sense of time passing; at least that's the best sense I can make of it.

CHAPTER 16

A SHORT DISCUSSION ON PHILOSOPHY

I've only read a dozen or so books on philosophy and I can't claim to have understood them all pretty well. So while I'm familiar with some philosophical issues, I'm by no means someone to rely on for philosophical insights. Perhaps the best advice I could give for a novice philosopher, would be to try to understand the vocabulary first. Words that have one meaning in ordinary vocabulary can be much more specific in relation to philosophy. That being said, there was one philosophical problem that raged for centuries which I don't see as a philosophical issue at all. Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative is a maxim that can be readily applied to any civilised people. If we're living in a civilised society governed by the rule of law then obviously lying to yourself or other people is morally repugnant. However, if you've encountered somebody who refuses to live a civilised life and is willing to kill both you and other people, then you're no longer in a civilised part of society. You're living in an area that's governed more by the Rule of War than the Rule of Law. And in war all kinds of immoral things are permissible, even downright laudable (in any other area of life we'd regard killing as horrific, but in war killing is a good thing). Obviously then, if you find yourself in an uncivilised situation, lying is no big deal at all. So if a murderer comes to your door asking if your friend is inside then lie away to the bastard.

CHAPTER 17

DRUGS AND GOD

This chapter might be better titled “Drugs and Spirituality” as there are many religions that don’t have a Christian-like god figure but still use drugs as part of religious ceremonies. For example there are many indigenous communities throughout the world that use sacred mushrooms, cacti and other psychedelic plants to commune with spiritual entities. I personally can’t claim to have ever met any of these entities and as far as I know, they aren’t real at all. But that’s just my experience so far. Who knows what I may yet experience, provided of course I keep an open mind on the subject.

The one thing we can say with absolute certainty is that the experiences people have during these “trips” feel extraordinary. They feel really, really good!

Secondly, consider the fact that for many millions of people, some of the best night’s of their lives they were high on alcohol. Alcohol is not only a lot of fun, it’s been associated with truth in most cultures since the ancient Greeks (from whom the Romans coined the phrase “in vino veritas”). It’s truth-telling properties are also praised in Norse mythology, where the alcoholic drink mead was considered to be a “magical divine substance that directly linked to poetry, inspiration and truth” (Google AI Overview). Telling the truth feels very good. Especially if it’s been repressed. Add that to the fact that people usually become very friendly and rather garrulous when drunk and you’ve got a recipe for feeling very, very good.

The simple truth is that anything which takes you beyond the average, everyday feelings of joy and happiness, will probably inspire you. And if you’re a religious-minded person you may feel like this feeling is connected with God. But how?

God is the ultimate good. And anything that makes you feel transcendentally good (like powerful psychedelics) will make you feel close to God.

CHAPTER 18

THE KORAN IS A GOOD BOOK

While most Christians call the Bible “The Good Book”, the truth is that the Bible is composed of between 66 and 76 books, depending on which denomination it serves. And some of those books are closer to the truth than others due to both factual mistakes and translation errors. There’s even one book that’s a superb meditative experience when read as a means to enter a meditative state (the Book of Numbers) but can’t be read as the literal word of God. Unless of course you believe in animal sacrifices to ritually purify yourself after touching a woman having her period! According to The Book of Numbers, God even passed on instructions as to how to deal with cow dung. All jokes about “holy crap” aside, what does it matter to God what people do with cow dung. Hasn’t God got anything better to do than explain how dung is treated during ritual sacrifices.

Obviously I’d like to write more about the Bible but I’m still in the middle of reading it so who knows, it might get a chapter of it’s own in a later edition of this book.

I have read the Koran though and while it’s definitely a good book I can easily understand why Muslims might call it “The Good Book”.

I spent a few months in Cairo during the summer of 1989 and rented a flat in Giza. My landlord, Doctor Saed Hamzawi, lived in Saqqara which is about a 15 minute drive south of Giza and we’d meet up from time to time, have a few beers, shoot the breeze, usual man stuff.

One day we were talking about the Koran and he told me that there was a part of it that seems not to belong in the Koran at all. To him it looked like somebody had added this bit to the Koran as it was totally different to anything that had gone before it. The first time he read this he realised that if this piece wasn’t anything to do with God then the rest was the Word of God. And I can easily understand why someone raised a Muslim would come to that conclusion.

Fast forward about 20 years and I was in the middle of a time of my life when all I did was read books. OK I watched a bit of TV and enjoyed smoking a few joints but there was nothing going on in my life other than reading books. No job, no friends, no sports, no cinema, no nothing.....except books. So when I finally read the Koran for myself, I read it as if it were just another book.

As I was reading I came across parts that I found troublesome, especially when it talked about wifely responsibilities. But I retained my critical faculties and moved on. And then I came to the passage Saed had spoken about. It was the worst writing I've ever come across in all the books I've ever read. It's so bad the only book that I know of which even comes close is the final chapter of "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance". This book has sweet zip-all to do with motorcycle maintenance and is in fact all about madness. Some parts of the book are pretty disturbing but the last chapter is literally, awful. The author manages to put something down on paper that gives the reader a clue about insanity. But it doesn't even approach how badly the passage from the Koran reads.

So there I was, having just read the offending passage, and while it came across as just a whole pile of deep-didgery-doodoo, I started to consider what I'd read of the Koran up to that passage.

I realised that while reading the passage was a very negative experience, reading the rest of the Koran was the very opposite....it was very good. I realised that reading books is in and of itself a good thing. Books might not be a religion to me but I'd never appreciated up to that point, how much of a positive force in my life they were. Had I been raised Muslim it's highly likely that I'd have had a religious experience but for me I came to appreciate how important reading was to me. You might argue that anyone who spends 12 hours per day, 7 days per week reading books is obviously a bibliophile but that hadn't occurred to me before then. I was just reading books a lot, no big deal, so I thought.

Obviously the insights I had prior to reading the Koran helped with my understanding of it so if you decide to read the book for yourself then it might be a good idea to speak with an Imam first or with a Muslim friend.

CHAPTER 19

A FEW MORE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES

This chapter is probably my weakest attempt to communicate my experiences with God, so there's a good chance I'll delete the entire thing. Unless of course I can put some decent shape to it!

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1. Holy Wells

There are so many holy wells in Ireland that you'd be forgiven for wondering are there any wells here that aren't holy. But why are there so many?

I think pure water was probably a very rare commodity during prehistoric times, so the safest place to wash a wound would be where water first comes out of the ground. And over time if somebody had an earache that went away afterwards or a sore toe, well the stories take off and have a life of their own. So a place gets a rep that sticks and hey presto the famous waters from Lourdes or Liscannor that will cure this, that, or whatever ails you. But is it really all just bs?

I once heard an argument against miracle cures at Lourdes that basically asked why nobody has ever grown a new leg after visiting the grotto. Sure there are crutches and wheelchairs left behind by people who were miraculously cured but not one single, solitary prosthesis left behind by someone who arrived at the grotto missing a limb. I mean, wouldn't that be case closed. "Man grows new head after visiting Lourdes" would be enough to finally settle, once and for all time that yes, God does actually exist. However, this has never happened and most likely, will never happen.

Lets put our cynic's hat to one side for the moment and let's all agree that people who find relief from their visits to holy wells are probably experiencing an enhanced placebo effect. Where the beliefs of the person who's suffering combine with ritual to produce a cure of some kind. Everything I've been through tells me that miracle cures

only happen when the mind is involved, so it can't be a coincidence that you can only experience God in your mind. You can't physically see or touch God but you can experience the sensation of sight and touch in a vision.
So does God work in mysterious ways and does God cure people.....who knows! I wouldn't totally discount it. At the very least I'd wait until the placebo effect is properly understood before passing judgement.

2. Churches

When I was a very small child I attended mass every Sunday with my parents. And to be honest, I never once noticed anything there that reminded me of God. It was all so depressing with everyone just mumbling after the priest said something; so I tried to pay as little attention to the mass as possible (this was back in the days before the Second Vatican Council when the priest spoke with his back to the congregation, and he may even have been speaking Latin, I don't remember). I stood up when everyone else stood up, sat down when everyone else sat, blah, blah, blah. In fact, apart from one exception, I've never had a spiritual experience in a Catholic church. And that church was St. Peters in Rome.
At 20 years of age I was on my first solo holiday. I'd been to Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia from where I caught a ferry to Naples. I then spent a few days in a campsite near Pompeii before taking the train to Rome.
Rome was great; I had a ball seeing all the sites, apart from the Colosseum though. It was so weird; I couldn't bring myself to walk in and take a look around. Perhaps it was just the idea of casually visiting a place where so much slaughter had occurred. I honestly don't know
I was at least a few days in Rome before I checked out St. Peters and again something weird happened. Instead of walking in the wide-open centre door I walked up to a closed door on the right; a door that's only opened on special occasions. And no joking, my reaction was just like that of my mother's last dog when he found his way

blocked to a small copse of trees that he used to enjoy. He looked over at me to do something about it (I couldn't) and when I was outside St. Peters I looked to my left to see if there was anything that could be done about it.

Nothing could be done about that either so in I went through the main door just like everybody else and walked up the centre to St. Peter's Baldachin. There was a guy standing next to me saying a prayer and due to my experience of life, I didn't think praying was particularly appropriate. So I looked to my right and saw nothing. Looked to my left and there was a beam of light coming in through a high window. It looked beautiful and I'm sure the designers of the building fully intended for their audience to see exactly what I was seeing.

How and why has any of this got to do with God? About 15 years later something similar happened at my sister's wedding. They were standing to my right while taking their vows, I looked to my right and left exactly as I had done in St. Peters, and this time I could see nothing spiritual going on. The happy couple were blithely unconcerned with anything spiritual... in a church! Luckily for them and all the invited guests they managed to get rid of me after the dinner and I don't blame them. Weddings are a social occasion, not a religious event! How people getting married can have anything to do with God I don't know. Unless of course you regard the marriage ceremony to be sacred!

3. Egypt

The second place where I had a memorable religious-themed experience was when I climbed Mount Sinai.

I should say walked up Mount Sinai as there were clearly demarcated paths to the summit. And on that particular day I was with two dickheads from Australia. When we were three quarters the way to the top it became difficult to breath and talk at the same time, but I couldn't shut up! I don't know where I got all the energy from, in fact, the only other times in my life when I felt so energised was when I gave up

smoking in 1981, and when I walked up the Grand Gallery in Khufu's Pyramid a few weeks earlier.

When we got to the top the dickheads wanted to "absorb" the scenery but I took one look around, admired the view for a second, and pissed off. Coming down by another path I came across a stone archway and just as I got to it I saw a young Egyptian man walk across the gate. I went through the gate, looked left to see where he'd gone and there was no place that I could see where he went to.

I really don't think he simply disappeared or anything. More likely there was a small hideaway that I couldn't see.....whatever. I don't myself attach any significance to the disappearing Egyptian, I'm much more interested in where all the energy came from.

I had another religious experience in an Egyptian Coptic monastery.

I've tried finding it online but can't find any site anywhere that describes the monastery I visited. It's about an hour or so by car north of Cairo and at the rear is a small cave where the original founder of the monastery used to pray. There's enough room for a few people (at most) to stand/kneel inside the cave, where they look up at a recess in the wall. I did so and something happened. I don't know what happened but I knew it was something special, as it reminded me of God.

The only other experience worth chronicling was when I was in Luxor.

I walked into Luxor Temple (not Karnak), looked over to my left at the mosque built into the wall of the temple and looked straight ahead at the "holy of holies". I asked myself was there anything to all this religion and felt a hand on my shoulders, propelling me forward. It reminded me immediately of when my father had gently propelled me on the same manner, in order to save me from a bunch of rapists and murderers. There's obviously a huge back story to that which I'll only relate after my father dies.

CHAPTER 20

PAIN AND SUFFERING

I caught the ulcers bug at a family picnic when I was around 10 years old and they stayed with me for the next 30 years.

It started as case of food poisoning from sausages that had gone off and until I was 16 it wasn't much of an issue at all. I'd still experience stomach pains from time to time but nothing so serious it needed medical attention. However, after moving to a new town when I was 16, I spent hours every night trying to sleep while experiencing severe stomach pain. The doctor said I was too young to have ulcers and the specialist said an x-ray exam would show scarring regardless of whether I had ulcers or not (so what's the point of adding a negative label to yourself that might effect your future job prospects). Nobody knew it at the time, that ulcers are caused by a bacterial infection, so I slept with a pint of milk and sandwich next to my bed in order to get some relief later in the night. The bugs had eaten away my stomach lining so the milk and bread gave my digestive juices something to eat besides my stomach wall, for (usually) a half hour or so.

And that was my life for the next 30 years. Making sure I had the right foods at the right time to keep the pain at bay. Although there were certainly long stretches of time when I wasn't in any pain at all, it would be very unusual to go an entire year without a flare-up. So I was always sensitive to doing/eating anything that might cause the ulcers to become active again.

That is until I developed large ulcers, which are so bad that not even eating something or drinking milk brought any relief. Days and nights without end I was in pain. It was non-stop and nothing I could do that would bring any kind of relief.

I well remember the first large ulcer I got, when I was in such pain that if the human body had evolved an "off" switch, I'd have gladly used it. The cruel part was that no

matter how bad the pain got I never passed out. Like most people I thought that all humans fall unconscious when the pain gets bad enough....no such luck!
Until the second time I had a large ulcer, the last flare-up before I took the cure. The pain from my second large ulcer started in a February and it didn't stop until June so that was a minimum of 4 solid months of non-stop excruciating pain and not a wink of sleep. The pain was so bad I started eating meat again to see if that would help, but nothing did. I have a very clear memory of what was probably well into the second month when I was so exhausted from lack of sleep (and lack of food) that for a few seconds I blacked out. No pain whatsoever..... God it was pure bliss, heaven on earth, to find myself so abruptly in no pain. I've heard that Fentanyl is also very fast acting and can be quickly dialled up if a patient is in pain, and this felt very similar. But my brain woke up and I was back in the shit again for another couple of months.
Now I'm going to tell you something extraordinary, something so incredible that you'll think this guy is effing nuts! What do you think happened after I took the cure in June. Not much. In September....same. January, February, March.....around a year later and not one ulcer flare up. I realised that the ulcers were gone for good and that they'd never bother me again. And do you know how I felt? Not relieved, not joyous, not.....I felt sad. Sad that these things that I'd had for most of my life were gone. I actually missed my pain! Nuts, right. Not so, as this short story about his majesty Stephen Fry might explain.
I once watched a TV series he did about his bipolar disorder and at the end he asked himself if there was a cure, would he take it. Or like the Tom Waits song **Please Call Me Baby,** would he lose his creative talents.

"I admit that I ain't no angel, I admit that I ain't no saint—
I'm selfish and I'm cruel and I'm blind.
If I exorcise my devils, well my angels may leave too.
When they leave they're so hard to find..."

He eventually admitted that he wouldn't take the cure which sounds extraordinary but not if it's something you've grown to rely on. My ulcers were the greatest excuse you

could ever want for not doing things or hanging out with people. They gave me an excuse to not live life. I could always blame the ulcers for anything bad that happened so for me they were a crutch I could well do without. And these days, as I'm getting old, I'm only too glad that I don't have to deal with ulcers along with all the other medical problems that come with advancing age.

So, you may say, I've got a pretty good handle on what a chronic, long term medical condition is all about. And while that may appear to be the case, I can assure you that all I know is what ulcer pain feels like. I have no clue how hard it is to live with non-ulcer-related pain. All I can say is that I can readily understand how it takes over your life. I have an appreciation for the suffering you've been through or are presently going through but I know for a fact that your chronic pain is so bad it's basically indescribable. It's somewhere in the region of beyond the beyond the beyond.....and that's all.

I have one further thing to say that I know about chronic pain and it's this; no matter how bad the physical pain you may be suffering, the pain from mental disease (though entirely different) is every bit as bad. I once had a bout of depression that lasted roughly 6 months and it was the most soul-destroying illness I've ever been through. At least with the physical pain I could understand that there was something wrong in my stomach. I may have been unsure as to what actually was causing the physical pain, but I knew it was a real medical problem. But with depression, how can I describe it. Perhaps the closest analogy I can make is that it's like waking up every morning to the awful realisation that all the people you know and love, are all dead. I used to wake up and before I even opened my eyes I had the feeling that I can't go through another second of this. Very first thing every morning, until one day after I woke I wasn't fucked up, or managed to not feel fucked up, until I'd actually opened my eyes. And then it was back in the shit of course but that brief fraction of a second was enough. The fraction eventually went to a second, so I was out of bed before the depression set in. And after that I was able to take a few steps before the

black dog had a hold of me. And eventually the day came when I got halfway to the loo before |I felt that horrible feeling starting to take over. But I refused!

I refused to feel that way any more. I got downstairs still refusing. Did all I needed to do before leaving the house, still no black dog. And I even got halfway into town before that feeling tried to bring me down again. But again, I refused.

I don’t remember too much after that but the basic pattern remained. I’d feel the depression trying to take over and just used my willpower to prevent it from doing so.